

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A system configured to provide user input to an application program, comprising:

5 a plurality of software input methods that are independent of the application program, each software input method having an input panel configured to receive user input based on user interaction therewith; and

10 a software input method manager, the software input method manager configured to select one of the input methods based on a state of the application program, to enable user interaction with the input panel of the input method to provide input to the application program.

15 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the application program communicates the state to the software input method manager.

20 3. The system of claim 3, further comprising, a component external to the application program that determines the state of the application and communicates the state to the software input method manager.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the state of the application program corresponds to a field having input focus.

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5. The system of claim 4 wherein the application program communicates data corresponding to the field to the software input method manager, and wherein the software input method manager selects the input method based on the data.

6. The system of claim 3 wherein the application program communicates data corresponding to the field to the software input method manager, and wherein the software input method manager selects the input method based on the data.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein the application program communicates the key-related data to the software input method, and wherein the software input method configures at least some keys on the input panel based on the key-related data.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein the application program communicates the key-related data to the software input method via an XML format.

9. The system of claim 7 wherein the key-related data includes a string corresponding to a meaning of at least one variable key.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising, a database of previous use input information, wherein the software input method configures at least some keys on the input panel based on the previous user input information.

11. A computer-implemented method, comprising:
receiving, from an application program, application program state data at a software input method manager;

selecting a selected input method from a plurality of software input methods, each software input method being independent of the application program and having an input panel configured to receive user input based on user interaction therewith; and

returning data to the application program corresponding to user interaction with the input panel, the input panel having at least one displayed key that when actuated returns a string of at least two characters to the application program.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising, receiving key configuration data in relation to the selected input method, and configuring at least one key on the input panel based on the key configuration data.

13. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 14.

14. A computer-implemented method, comprising:
5 receiving application program state data at a software input method manager;
selecting an input panel based on the application program state data, the input panel independent of the application program;
10 displaying keys on the input panel to enable user interaction with the input panel; and
returning key data to the application program corresponding to user interaction with the input panel.

15 15. The method of claim 14 wherein receiving application program state data comprises receiving data corresponding to a communication from the application program.

20 16. The method of claim 14 wherein receiving application program state data comprises receiving data corresponding to a communication from component external to the application program.

17. The method of claim 14 wherein selecting an input panel comprises loading an input method.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein selecting an input panel comprises notifying a loaded input method.

19. The method of claim 14 further comprising, receiving key configuration information corresponding to the state, and configuring at least some of the keys on the input panel based on the key configuration information.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein receiving key configuration information comprises receiving data corresponding to a communication from the application program.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein receiving key configuration information comprises receiving data corresponding to a communication from component external to the application program.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein receiving data corresponding to the communication from the component external to the application program comprises, accessing a database.

23. The method of claim 14 wherein returning key data to the application program comprises, returning a string of at least two characters in response to a single displayed key being actuated.

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24. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 14.

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